

EPA's Earth Day Sham

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NEW YORK -- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Christine Todd Whitman is coming under fire today for trying to cover up the Bush Administration's environmental record with her public appearances in New York City for Earth Day.

"Without a doubt, Administrator Whitman has led an agency that has done more harm to New Yorkers than perhaps all of the previous Administrations combined," said Rep. Nadler. "For her to come to New York on Earth Day and pretend she is a friend to New York and its environment is a complete sham."

Specifically, Rep. Nadler cited three Whitman decisions:

NEGLECT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS CAUSED BY COLLAPSE OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER -- Under Administrator Whitman, the EPA bucked its responsibility under Federal law to clean up interior spaces of New York City that were -- and continue to be -- contaminated with hazardous materials released by the collapse of the World Trade Center.

Said Rep. Nadler, "In ten years or so, this City will see an explosion in cases of cancer, mesothelioma, and other respiratory diseases that will dwarf the problems many New Yorkers already have faced because of contaminated interiors. We will look back at this Earth Day, when she pretends to be helping New Yorkers, and wonder how anyone could perpetrate such a farce."

CLEAR SKIES INITIATIVE -- Under the guidance of Republican Pollster Frank Luntz, who wrote a memo to key Republicans on how to sound environmentally friendly, the Administration unveiled the Enviro-friendly "Clear Skies Initiative." Despite the name, and the insistence that this initiative will cut pollution and clean our air, the plan actually is an industry wish list that allows industrial facilities to pollute more and over longer periods of time, and rolls back much of the Clean Air Act. According to the League of Conservation Voters, "mercury emissions alone would be up to three times higher than current law allows."

Said Rep. Nadler, "It takes a great deal of chutzpah to stand up in front of New Yorkers, smile for the cameras and say you care about the environment, while pushing a plan for big-moneyed interests, that is really one of the largest rollbacks of environmental standards in generations. But if there are two things this Administration is not short on, it's corporate campaign cash and chutzpah."

ENVIRONMENTAL EXEMPTIONS FOR "DEFENSE" -- The Department of Defense is one of the nation's worst polluters. The DOD has 72% of all sites on the Superfund National Priorities List, is responsible for cleaning up 28,500 potentially contaminated sites around the country, thousands of Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS), and manages 25 million acres of land in the United States. Yet, the Administration and Whitman are lobbying Congress to exempt the DOD from many of the nation's environmental laws. They claim these exemptions are necessary for military readiness, especially in the wake of 9/11. But the General Accounting Office (GAO) found that military readiness remains high and is not hampered by environmental laws. Several Army officials and even Administrator Whitman herself admitted, when pressed, that not one training mission has been held up because environmental laws.

Said Rep. Nadler, "How Administrator Whitman can even dare use the September 11th attacks as an excuse for exempting the Department of Defense -- one of the worst polluters -- from environmental laws is beyond me. It is offensive to the people who lost their lives on that day, it is offensive to all New Yorkers who are still reeling, and it is

offensive to the people in communities that will have to live with the harmful environmental wake that the DOD has left behind in their communities."

Rep. Nadler is this year's recipient of Earth Day New York/Natural Resources Defense Council's 2003 "Public Official of the Year" award.

Rep. Nadler has been in Congress since 1992. He represents the 8th Congressional District of New York, which includes parts of Manhattan and Brooklyn.

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